

ENGINE LUBRICATION SYSTEM

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] This invention relates to engine oil systems and, more particularly, to a system including pressure valves to optimize oil flow and pressure for various lubrication and actuation functions.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Internal combustion engines may use lubricating oil for many purposes including, for example, lubricating moving parts, actuating cam phasers, and controlling valve lifters for valve stepping and cylinder deactivation. Cam phasers and cylinder deactivation devices generally require a higher oil pressure for actuation during engine operation than the moving parts of the engine require for proper lubrication.

[0003] One approach to maximize engine efficiency is to use a smaller oil pump to provide only the minimum amount of oil pressure needed to prevent engine wear. However, smaller oil pumps do not provide enough oil pressure to actuate a cam phaser or switching lifters at low and idle engine speeds. Thus, cam phasing, valve stepping, and cylinder deactivation can only be achieved at higher engine speeds.

[0004] Another approach is to use a larger oil pump to provide enough oil pressure to operate the cam phaser or switching lifters at low engine speeds. This approach allows phasing, valve stepping, and cylinder deactivation at lower engine speeds to alter the valve timing and increase engine efficiency. However, the efficiency gains are not without cost. A higher pressure produced by larger oil pump supplies excess flow that over lubricates the moving parts of the engine and requires additional energy to drive the pump, creating parasitic losses that reduce engine efficiency.

[0005] A method is desired of selectively regulating oil pressure throughout an engine to increase engine efficiency while allowing the engine to operate a cam phaser or switching lifters at low engine speeds without having to greatly increase oil pump output.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] Co-pending applications pertaining to related subject matter were filed concurrently with this application on _____, 2003 as U.S. Application No. _____ (GP-302777), U.S. Application No. _____ (GP-303043), and U.S. Application No. _____ (GP-303046).

[0007] The present invention provides an oil system for an internal combustion engine having oil pressure control valves to optimize oil pressures in the engine while increasing engine efficiency by minimizing parasitic losses created from over lubrication.

[0008] In an exemplary embodiment, the oil system includes an oil pump having an inlet and an outlet. An oil pickup connected with the inlet extends into an engine oil sump to draw oil into the oil system. The outlet of the oil pump connects to a main oil feed which supplies oil to a main bearing gallery and a cam phaser. Oil sent to the cam phaser is used to actuate the cam phaser, while oil directed to the main bearing gallery is used primarily for lubrication purposes. In addition, some of the oil pumped into the main bearing gallery is sent through a cam gallery feed to a cam gallery in an upper part of the engine for lubrication of a valve train. When switching lifters are present, some of the oil directed to the cam phaser or the cam gallery may be diverted to the switching lifters to allow valve stepping or cylinder deactivation.

[0009] A pressure increasing valve connected between the main bearing gallery and the cam gallery has a small opening designed to provide minimal oil flow to the cam gallery while oil pump output is low. As oil pump output

increases, the pressure increasing valve reacts by providing additional openings to allow for additional flow through the valve.

[0010] The restriction of oil flow created by the pressure increasing valve increases oil pressure to the main bearing gallery, the main oil feed and the cam phaser while the cam gallery operates at a lower oil pressure. This allows cam phasing at engine idle or other conditions when oil pump pressure is normally too low to actuate the cam phaser. The additional oil pressure supplied to the cam phaser allows the phaser to vary valve timing at all engine speeds without a large increase in the size of the oil pump. The use of a smaller oil pump reduces parasitic losses for increased engine efficiency.

[0011] A pressure regulator valve positioned between the pressure increasing valve and the cam gallery regulates pressure to the cam gallery to control the switching lifters for valve stepping or cylinder deactivation. When low valve step operation is desired, the pressure regulator valve maintains a low oil pressure to the switching lifters. When high valve step operation is desired, the pressure regulator valve maintains a desired high oil pressure to the switching lifters. When the switching lifters are used for cylinder deactivation, the pressure regulator valve may be used to provide adequate oil pressure for cylinder deactivation or normal oil pressure for standard engine operation.

[0012] These and other features and advantages of the invention will be more fully understood from the following description of certain specific embodiments of the invention taken together with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. 1 is a pictorial view of an internal combustion engine including an oil system with a cam phaser according to the invention;

[0014] FIG. 2 is a pictorial view of a portion of a direct acting valve train with switching lifters having portions broken away to show interior features of the components;

[0015] FIG. 3 is a pictorial view of an exemplary oil system for the engine of FIG. 1;

[0016] FIG. 4 is a pictorial view of a pressure increasing valve for the oil system; and

[0017] FIG. 5 is a diagrammatic view of a pressure regulator valve for the oil system.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0018] Referring now to FIG. 1 of the drawings in detail, numeral 10 generally indicates an internal combustion engine. The engine includes a cylinder block 12 having a bank of cylinders 14 containing pistons 16 connected with a crankshaft 18. A cylinder head 20 carries intake and exhaust valves 21, 22 actuated by camshafts 24, 26. A cam phaser 28 is mounted on the exhaust camshaft 26 to vary the exhaust valve timing. An oil pan 30 below the block forms an oil sump for the engine.

[0019] FIG. 2 illustrates an exhaust portion of an engine valve train 32 for use in an overhead cam piston type engine. The valve train 32 includes exhaust camshaft 26 which is driven through a drive sprocket 34 connected by a chain 36 (FIG. 1) with the engine crankshaft 18. Cam phaser 28 is connected between the sprocket 34 and the camshaft 26 in order to vary the timing of the camshaft relative to the piston motion and other operating functions of the engine and relative to other camshafts of the engine.

[0020] The exhaust valves 22 are actuated through switching valve lifters 38 which are engaged by cams 40 of the camshaft 26. The switching valve lifters 38 react to oil pressure to deactivate or selectively change the amount of valve lift provided for the associated exhaust valves 22. More

particularly, oil pressure supplied to the switching lifters 38 may be used to reduce valve lift or disable valve lift for cylinder deactivation.

[0021] FIG. 3 illustrates the passages of an oil system 44 within the engine 10. The oil system includes an engine driven oil pump 46 having an inlet 48 and an outlet 50. An oil pickup 52 connected with the pump 46 extends into the sump of the oil pan 30. The pump 46 connects through an oil filter 54 with a main oil feed 56. The main oil feed 56 distributes oil to a cam phaser feed 58 and a main bearing gallery 60. The main bearing gallery 60 supplies oil to crankshaft main bearings and connecting rod bearings, not shown. The main bearing gallery 60 connects with a cam gallery feed 62 which carries oil to a cam gallery 64 for lubricating camshaft bearings and valve gear 66 within the cylinder head 20 of the engine 10.

[0022] In accordance with the invention, a pressure increasing valve 68, as shown in FIG. 4 is, connected between the main bearing gallery 60 and the cam gallery 64. The pressure increasing valve 68 has a tubular housing 70 surrounding a slidable flow control piston 72. The piston 72 internally defines an orifice 74. A biasing spring 76 between the piston 72 and an outlet end 78 of the housing 70 urges the piston 72 toward an inlet end 80 of the housing, to close a large inlet opening 82 in the housing. A plurality of bypass openings 84 extend through a tubular wall of the housing 70 adjacent the inlet end 80.

[0023] Under low oil pressure conditions, the biasing spring 76 holds the flow control piston 72 against the inlet end 80 of the housing 70, closing the bypass openings 84 to only allow oil flow through the orifice 74 of the pressure increasing valve 68.

[0024] As oil pressure increases at the inlet end 80 of the housing 70, the piston 72 begins to slide toward the outlet end 78 and compress the biasing spring 76. As the piston 72 moves toward the outlet end 78, the piston allows incoming oil to flow through the bypass openings 84 to increase oil pressure to the cam gallery 64. As oil pressure on the inlet end 80 of the

housing 70 is reduced, the biasing spring 76 pushes the piston 72 back toward the inlet end 80 to close the bypass openings 84 and reduce oil pressure to the cam gallery 64.

[0025] A pressure regulator valve 86, as shown in FIG. 5, is connected between the cam gallery 64 and the pressure increasing valve 68. The pressure regulator valve 86 has a housing 88 surrounding a piston subassembly 89 comprising first and second slidable flow control pistons 90, 92. Pistons 90, 92 are oppositely spaced and positioned adjacent an inlet 94 and an outlet 96 of the housing 88. A biasing spring 98 positioned above the piston subassembly 89 biases the pistons 90, 92 toward the lower end 100 of the housing 88 to space the pistons away from the inlet 94 to allow maximum flow through the valve 86. Alternatively, a solenoid may be used in place of the biasing spring 98 to control the placement of the pistons 90, 92 within the housing 88. A pressure control inlet 102 diverts a portion of the incoming oil to a lower surface 104 of the piston 92 to increase amount of oil pressure acting upon the lower surface. The oil pressure acting upon the lower surface 104 lifts the piston subassembly 89 against the biasing spring 98 causing the second piston 92 to obstruct the inlet 94 to reduce flow through the valve 86.

[0026] Referring now to FIGS. 3-5, the inlet 94 of the pressure regulator valve 86 receives oil from the cam gallery feed 62. The position of the pistons 90, 92 relative to the inlet 94 regulates the amount of oil directed through the valve 86 to the cam gallery 64 to control the amount of oil pressure supplied to the switching lifters 38 of the valve train 32. Preferably, the pressure regulator valve 86 provides low oil pressure for normal valve train 32 operation and higher oil pressure as needed for high step valve train operation or cylinder deactivation.

[0027] As the incoming oil pressure to the pressure control inlet 102 increases, the piston subassembly 89 moves against the biasing spring 98 causing the second piston 92 to partially obstruct flow through the inlet 102

to maintain a predetermined maximum oil pressure to the cam gallery 64 and the switching lifters 38. As the incoming oil pressure to the pressure control inlet 102 decreases, the biasing spring system 98 moves the piston subassembly 89 toward its original position, thereby opening the inlet 94 to reduce restriction through the valve 86.

[0028] During engine operation, the oil pump 46 draws oil from the oil pan 30 through the oil pickup 52. The oil is then pumped through the pump outlet 50 and oil filter 54 to the main oil feed 56. The oil in the main oil feed 56 is then directed to the main bearing gallery 60 and the cam phaser 28. Some of the oil in the main bearing gallery 60 flows to the cam gallery 64 through the pressure increasing valve 68.

[0029] At lower engine speeds while oil pump output is minimal, only a small portion of the oil pumped though the oil system 44 flows through the orifice 74 of the pressure increasing valve 68. The remainder of the oil not flowing through the orifice 74 builds oil pressure on the inlet end 80 of the pressure increasing valve 68 which creates back pressure in the main bearing gallery 60 and in turn increases oil pressure to main oil feed 56 and the cam phaser 28. This allows the cam phaser 28 to actuate during idle and low rpm conditions, when oil pump pressure would otherwise be too low for cam phaser actuation. This restriction of oil flow to the cam gallery 64 at lower engine speeds limits the system's oil flow requirements, thereby allowing the engine 10 to operate with a smaller more efficient oil pump.

[0030] The pressure regulator valve 86 regulates oil flow from the cam gallery feed 62 to the cam gallery 64 and the switching lifters 38. During low oil pressure operation, such as idle or low rpm operation, the size of the inlet 94 maintains an oil pressure to the cam gallery 64 which is optimal to cause the switching lifters 38 to operate with low valve lift.

[0031] As engine speed increases, the output from the oil pump 46 increases, causing the oil pressure in the system to increase. As oil pressure increases at the inlet end 80, the piston 72 slides toward the outlet end 78

against the biasing spring 76. The movement of the piston 72 increases flow through the pressure increasing valve 68 by opening the bypass openings 84. The increased flow of oil through the pressure increasing valve 68 increases oil pressure within the cam gallery feed 62 before the pressure regulator valve 86.

[0032] The increased oil pressure in the cam gallery feed 62 causes pressure to increase on the lower surface 104 of the piston 92, which causes the piston subassembly 89 to move upward in the housing 88 and compress the biasing spring 98. As the piston subassembly 89 moves upward, the second piston 92 restricts flow through the inlet 94 to maintain a desired high oil pressure to the cam gallery 64 and the switching lifters 38 to cause high valve lift operation.

[0033] Alternatively, if the engine is equipped with switching lifters 38 for cylinder deactivation, cylinder deactivation may be achieved by changing the oil flow rates through the pressure regulator valve as needed so that at lower engine speeds the switching lifters receive adequate oil pressure for cylinder deactivation.

[0034] While the invention has been described by reference to certain preferred embodiments, it should be understood that numerous changes could be made within the spirit and scope of the inventive concepts described. Accordingly, it is intended that the invention not be limited to the disclosed embodiments, but that it have the full scope permitted by the language of the following claims.